

## **The Congressman recognized the bravery of the WWII Veterans**

August 17, 2009

Media, Pa – Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) welcomed the members of the 83<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division to his District Saturday evening at their 63rd annual reunion. The Congressman, who served in the Navy for 31 years and achieved 3-star Admiral, paid tribute to the extraordinary accomplishments of the 83

rd

Division, including at the Battle of the Bulge, shared his own experiences as a Veteran, and fielded questions from the attendees.

“I was honored to address the Veterans of the 83<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division who made historic advancements in Europe and fought selflessly to defend the democratic principles of this country during their military service in World War II,” said the Congressman, the son of a Navy Captain who served in World War II. “The men and women who have worn the cloth of this nation deserve the greatest gratitude and respect from American citizens that they have earned.”

The 83<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division landed on Omaha Beach on June 18, 1944 to begin its advancement

into France. The division traveled an incredible 1,400 miles in 244 days of combat, losing over 15,000 soldiers in battle casualties. Among their many achievements, soldiers in the 83rd

took part in halting the German offensive at the Battle of the Bulge and liberating Langenstein, a sub-camp of the Buchenwald concentration camp. Veterans of the 83rd

Infantry Division from across the country and the Seventh District gathered for the banquet at Dolce Valley Forge in King of Prussia, the closing event and highlight of the 4-day reunion. Earlier in the afternoon, the Veterans present attended a memorial service.

The Congressman has advocated strongly for Veterans in his District and across the nation. Recently, Congressman Sestak voted to pass the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2010. The legislation aims to improve the quality of life for military personnel and their families and to increase the amount of assistance that the VA can offer to the men and women who have defended our nation. The bill (HR 3082), which provides \$133.7 billion in funding, 5% more than current levels, includes, for the first time ever, funding for VA health programs by providing \$48.2 billion for FY 2011. This will allow for better planning and predictability for the VA and is a measure that was strongly advocated for by Veterans' organizations. Congressman Sestak earlier this year co-sponsored a bill that called for such advance funding. The bill also adds an additional \$533 million to expand eligibility to an estimated 266,000 "Priority 8" Veterans," an effort championed and started by Congressman Sestak to restore benefits denied by the Administration in 2003 to middle class and lower income Veterans who often have trouble affording health care. Bringing Priority 8 Veterans back into the VA was a major topic at the Congressman's 2008 Veterans Summit, attended by House Committee on Veterans Affairs Chairman Bob Filner. Following the event, the Congressman worked with Chairman Filner to begin reinstating Priority 8 Vets.

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security*

*Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.*